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EDAP 7801 – Dr. Parish  
Shadowing Experiences  
February 28, 2009

Shadowing I  
Thursday, February 12, 2008  
7:45am – 4:00pm

On my first day of shadowing, I learned a lot about the leadership style of the principal I was observing. At the start of the school day, she walked from the car rider line to each hallway in the building, sticking her head into each room to say, “Good morning” or to follow up with (what seemed to me) previous conversations. When we returned to her office she browsed email and sent an email to staff—a daily, morning habit that she said serves as a reminder to staff of upcoming events of the day. For example, she printed a copy for me that included the fact that I would be visible with her on observations and meetings as I was completing fieldwork for leadership certification. Other items included on the reminder communication were the deadline for the soldiers’ postcard project and fact that the dental van was screening students. It seemed to me that she believed communicating with her staff was an important component to her school management and leadership.

My observations in the first hour gave me some insight into her personality and how she interacts with the school staff. She was most cheerful and humorous at times as she greeted students and faculty in the halls. Two times, she commented to teachers about missing them at school and hoped that they were feeling better now that they had returned. This gave me the sense that she cared about her staff and that she also noted when they were out. I thought about her visibility in the school and compared it to the way teachers use proximity as a strategy for behavior management in the classroom. I

also considered that she was more approachable because of her effort to engage in friendly, frequent communication.

Several other events seemed to “interrupt” her work at her desk. A parent wanted to talk with her, a special education teacher called for administrative assistance dealing with a student, and several teachers needed to talk with her about students or personal situations. She made time for all of these things and also observed 3 teachers in the afternoon. It’s clear to me that an efficient leader must prioritize tasks and become flexible when situations come up.

Later that afternoon, we had lunch in the teachers’ lounge and we talked about my observations. I asked questions to clarify my understandings of particular situations. She explained that communication was an essential part of an administrator’s job. She described many things that needed to be communicated to parents and school staff. She also acknowledged that while most of her communication was providing information about the school and events, some of her communication was more personal and reciprocal. She believed that making time for teachers and parents who “pop in” her office allows her to be aware of issues that are forming. If she knows about certain things ahead of time, she may be able to take action and prevent a potential problem.

During my observation experience, after shadowing most of the day, I was able to assist in making calls to parents to remind them of the upcoming intersession for Walton County. Although Walton County has an automated calling system to remind parents and families of certain events, Dr. Spruill wanted to get a response from parents confirming (or not confirming) their child’s attendance for intersession. This particular intersession provided 4 days of extra instruction to students who needed it or who needed to make up

absences. I think parents appreciate this kind of communication and several had questions about the schedule and transportation.

Many examples of communication that I observed on this first day relate to the communication in Standards 1 and 2 of the ELCC. Dr. Spruill's efforts to communicate with parents and staff help support her implementation of the school's vision and promote a positive school culture.

Shadowing Experience II  
Tuesday, February 17, 2008  
7:45am – 12:30pm

The next shadowing experience occurred during the first day of intersession. The two ELCC standards that stand out for me for this experience are Standard 3 (managing organization, operations, and resources) and Standard 6 ( understanding, responding, and influencing the larger context of education). The previous week, I participated in creating the intersession schedule for students and teachers. Four broad cabinet doors served as the “drawing board” for manipulating time slots and teacher schedules with large yellow sticky notes. Several notes had the number of students who needed more math instruction or reading instruction, and which students needed to be served by special education teachers. When I arrived Tuesday morning, I could tell that all those sticky notes had been transformed to a tight schedule where students rotated among appropriate teachers and enjoyed a small break and snack in the middle.

What had not been created, yet, was a master roll of students with transportation information to be distributed to teachers before dismissal. Five elementary schools participated in intersession that convened at one school to efficiently use system resources. I learned that the transportation department had called students and families

over the weekend to confirm their need for service. There were many details to think about on this first day that were different from the normal school routines of the students. I assisted in created tables with students' names, schedules, and bus routes for each of the teachers, to help this first day of intersession to go smoothly.

Throughout the morning, the office called because parents had dropped off students and wanted to verify their transportation home. Because teachers were involved in instruction, an administrator had to escort each child to the appropriate room and communicate with parents on transportation and schedule for the rest of the week. When she wasn't on the way to or from the office, Dr. Spruill moved up and down the hall to check in on teachers and deliver last minute supplies, like dry erase markers. She organized and directed staff members to deliver the snacks to students and called one parent for a child who was sick.

On this day, all of the planning and organizing of staff and resources was evident. Many scheduling issues related to managing instruction and transportation were worked out to provide a safe and effective educational experience toward the goal of improving student achievement. The instruction provided during intersession is evidence that administrators in this school and system understand the larger context of schooling (e.g., the achievement goals of NCLB, economic and cultural factors that affect students' learning, and programs/policies/practices that will help all students be successful learners).